



**State of California • Department of Fish and Game**  
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# NEWS

**NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **DFG, CAPS Mourn Loss of Colleagues, Set Up Fund for Victims' Families**

The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and California Association of Professional Scientists (CAPS) today remembered and honored their fallen colleagues.

Yesterday, Clu Cotter, DFG Associate Biologist, 48 years old, Kevin O'Connor, DFG Senior Biologist Supervisor, 40 years old, and Tom Stolberg, DFG Scientific Aide, 31 years old, all of Fresno, lost their lives in a helicopter crash. Helicopter pilot Dennis (Mike) Donovan of Landells Aviation, also lost his life. They were on a routine aerial deer survey when the crash occurred in a remote section of Madera County. An investigation is under way into the cause of the crash.

Governor Schwarzenegger announced that State Capitol flags will be flown at half staff. DFG Director John McCamman also ordered flags to be flown at half staff across the state at all DFG buildings in honor of the fallen scientists.

CAPS set up a memorial fund for the four victims' families. Interested donors can give to the fund by sending checks to:

State Biologists Memorial Fund  
c/o CAPS  
455 Capitol Mall, Suite 500  
Sacramento, CA 95814

McCamman immediately instituted critical incident counseling teams to work with DFG staff to help them deal with the loss of their coworkers. DFG is also working with the victims' families to offer support.

"Fish and Game employees are very much like a big family and this is a tremendous loss to our team," said Director McCamman. "We will continue to do everything we can to help the victims' families and our employees during this difficult time."

DFG annually conducts helicopter surveys to track trends in California deer populations. Surveys are conducted from the air because of cost-effectiveness compared to ground surveys, access to remote locations and to reduce bias compared to road-based observation. DFG has grounded all helicopter surveys and captures until further notice.

DFG does not have information on memorial services at this time.

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